

# BACK CARE FACTS

Back pain is a very common problem. Most people get it at some point in their lives.

**Back pain** is a common work-related health issue in every industry. Most commonly occurs in the **lower back**, but can occur along your spine, from your neck down to your hips.



## WHAT CAUSES BACK PAIN?

Often the cause is unknown. At other times, back pain could be related to mechanical causes:

- > Lifting heavy or bulky loads.
- > Carrying awkwardly.
- > Repetitive tasks.
- > Long distance driving or driving over rough ground.
- > Poor posture; stooping, bending or crouching.
- > Pushing, pulling or dragging heavy loads.
- > Stretching, twisting and reaching.
- > Prolonged periods in one position.
- > Driving in a hunched position or for long periods without breaks.
- > Working beyond your limits.
- > Working when physically unfit.



Some factors might put you at greater risk:

- > Advancing age
- > Lack of physical exercise
- > Obesity
- > Smoking
- > Anxiety / depression
- > Improper lifting / twisting movement
- > Certain medical conditions



**Back pain symptoms** vary depending on cause.



- > Dull ache
- > Shooting or stabbing pain
- > Pain radiating down to leg
- > Limited flexibility and range of motion
- > Inability to stand up straight
- > May worsen with movement

See your doctor if pain does not improve within a few days.

## WARNING SIGNS - See a doctor if you have:

- > Severe pain, with no improvement after rest
- > History accident or trauma
- > Loss of bladder or bowel control
- > Numbness, tingling and weakness in one or both legs
- > Previous back surgery
- > Unwanted weight loss
- > Chest pain
- > Worsening of pain at night
- > Onset after 50 years of age
- > History of cancer, osteoporosis, steroid use, drug or alcohol abuse

## MOST BACK PAIN IS PREVENTABLE

### 6 simple ways to prevent back pain

**Understand your pain**  
- how it improves, how it worsens?



**Exercise**  
- walking, yoga, pilates, swimming and core and back muscles strengthening



**Manage your weight**



**Maintain proper posture**



**Reduce stress**



**Quit smoking**



### STAND SMART

- > Maintain neutral position
- > For long periods, rest your feet alternately on a footstool to take some load off the back



### SIT SMART

- > Avoid sitting for long periods.
- > Move around regularly.
- > Stretch at intervals.
- > Take one to two-minute breaks every 30 minutes.



## TREATMENT

Most back pain resolves with home care:

- > use simple over-the-counter pain killers
- > try hot and cold packs
- > rest only for a short period
- > exercise within limits
- > go for physiotherapy sessions



In serious cases, you may need, injections or surgery.

Other treatments, such as manual manipulation, acupuncture, strength training etc. may help some people and should be done on doctor's advice.

